DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 368 185 FL 021 941

AUTHOR Malcolm, Ian G.
TITLE Languages for Specific Purposes and Degree Studies: Are They Compatible?
PUB DATE Apr 93
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Language Center Seminar (28th, Singapore, April 19-21, 1993).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Credits; *College Second Language Programs; Cultural Education; Developmental Studies Programs; Educational Objectives; *Educational Policy; *English for Academic Purposes; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Immersion Programs; *Languages for Special Purposes; *Majors (Students); Mandarin Chinese; Program Descriptions; School Policy
IDENTIFIERS Australia; *Edith Cowan University (Australia)

ABSTRACT

Research suggests a widespread perception that language study in higher education is an end in itself, as the preservation of culture. However, in Australia, university second language programs have been designed for practical purposes, and increasing pressure is seen for instruction in languages for special purposes (LSP). The question of whether LSP is an appropriate field in which to give academic credit has arisen. Criteria for inclusion in degree-level study are: function as academic support and a source of academic activities, and focus on skills and content. Four second language programs at Edith Cowan University (Australia), all guided to some extent by the LSP concept, illustrate the argument in favor of inclusion in degree-level study. The programs are: a developmental literacy unit, which provides academic support and focuses on skills; a program in English for academic purposes, which focuses on skills but has an essentially academic function; language majors in Chinese, French, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish, all of which combine language and thematic content; and an experimental immersion program in Chinese culture taught in Mandarin Chinese at the intermediate level. Based on these examples, it appears that LSP and degree studies can be compatible. (Contains 24 references.) (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 368 185

LANGUAGES FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES AND DEGREE STUDIES: ARE THEY COMPATIBLE?

Ian G. Malcolm

Faculty of Arts

Edith Cowan University,

Perth, Western Australia

Paper for presentation at the 1993 RELC Regional Seminar on Language for

Specific Purposes: Problems and Prospects

Singapore, 19th - 21st April, 1993

FL021941

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Ian G. Malcolm

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

1. Languages in the University

My concern in this paper is with language teaching in the University. The advent of the concept of languages for specific purposes has been one of a number of factors affecting thinking in university language departments and, in some cases, bringing about significant changes of practice. Having been a part of such a changing situation in my own university in Australia, I am taking the opportunity of this presentation to get a perspective on some of the areas of change and debate.

Fundamentally, universities, and the rest of contemporary society, have been largely engaged over recent years in seeking to get the balance right between what has been called the "useful" and the "valuable" in life and education. There are some who would subsume the value under the usefulness, but, as Gordon Graham, who makes the distinction this way, points out, "every **human** life will contain actions and objects whose purpose is to sustain life, and others whose purpose is to make life worth sustaining" (Graham, 1986:8), and these actions are mutually interdependent. To argue that we need engineers more than opera singers because they are more useful is to ignore the fact that the usefulness of the roads the engineer enables us to make is determined by our having somewhere we want to go, perhaps to the opera (Graham, 1986:13).

Traditionally, university language departments, at least in countries like my own, have seen their role as related to the preservation of the "valuable" in the world's cultural heritage.

A recent national survey of the views of Australian academics (Leal, Bettoni and Malcolm, 1991) showed that many of them saw the study of modern languages at university as essentially related to cultural rather than practical objectives.

Reference was made by those surveyed to "language as a code system of a culture" and to the study of language as justified "for the insights it gives to the culture and literature of other societies." Some years ago a well-known professor of French at an Australian university argued that "to make practical language proficiency a prime objective and to construct some of our courses accordingly...we would lose other things we value more highly" (Jackson, 1968:6). What was it that he saw as valued more highly? It was, as he put it,

> "the peculiarly civilizing experience of trying to obtain a sensitive grasp of a sophisticated instrument of human expression such as French or German or Chinese, using it for the critical exploration and enjoyment of some masterpieces of literature, and making immediate contact through literature with the attitudes, values, ruling ideas and significant myths constitutive of the culture as a whole" (1968:6).

Viewed this way, the use of language study is self evident: it is useful as an end in itself. In other words, usefulness has been subsumed under value. Or, as Richard Lambert put it in surveying the national foreign language system in U.S.A., "...the system as a whole is not use directed, with the possible exception of a preparation for an appreciation of literature" (Lambert, 1989:3). Increasingly, however, since the 1960s when in Australia, foreign language prerequisites were no longer required for university entrance, universities have had to recognize a language teaching role beyond that which is purely culturally-based. It was in the 60s that Australian universities first began to offer beginners' language courses as a part of degree programmes. Such courses are now virtually universal and account for a significant part of student enrolments in language departments. This is seen by Quinn (1982) as one of two major forces responsible for threatening to "dethrone" literary studies in language departments. The other force is the economic one, which has caused universities to be looked to increasingly as institutions in which the workforce to head economic renewal is to be trained.

External pressures are being put upon universities to provide a professional workforce with an increasingly global orientation, and this includes the possession of languages for professional purposes.

In Australia this has coincided with major reforms in the higher education system, involving, since 1988, the conflation of a three-tier to a two-tier system of post-school education and the participation of former colleges of advanced education with the traditional universities in a Unified National System of higher education. This change has brought an increased demand for community and vocational relevance into university education.

The 1990 survey which revealed some of the traditional attitudes to university language teaching which I have referred to also revealed changes of attitude. There was a new current of support for targeted language courses for Australian professionals and for the concept of language learning as (in the words of one Professor of Japanese) "a complementary part of professional education of students in economics, law, engineering, sciences, history, and other academic disciplines."

There are, then, at the present time, two competing conceptions of language learning in Australian universities: one which sees it as a preparatory or subsidiary activity for truly academic studies, and one which sees it as a legitimate academic pursuit in its own right which can co-exist on equal terms alongside other aspects of professional preparation. Now that language for specific purposes (if I might use the term in its broadest sense) co-exists with language-and-literature as an option for university-level study, the question arises as to whether or not it is equally worthy of inclusion as an area of study attracting credit towards a degree.

In approaching this question, I would like to start where I am, and look at four of the provisions for language learning which are made at Edith Cowan University, all of them to some extent influenced by the concept of language for specific purposes, and to consider the claims they may have for consideration as being a part of degree-level study.

2. A Model

To help me to do this, I would like to offer a simple model, shown in Figure i, which relates course types to four criteria which I believe are relevant to the consideration of the degree to which they meet the expectations of university academic programmes. My assumption is that universities, in the present world, exist to fill many different student language learning needs. Not all these needs can be satisfied in degree studies, but some can. There is no necessary reason to exclude courses in language for specific purposes from degree studies. However their appropriateness for inclusion in programmes for degree credit will depend in large part on their function and focus. The relevant functions are academic support and academic, and the relevant areas of focus are skills and content.

By **academic support**, I refer to activities which do not carry the full cognitive demands of academic study within a discipline or domain of inquiry. Such activities contrast with **academic** activities, which bring the student as a participating member into a particular community of scholarly discourse. By a **skills** focus, I refer to a focus on the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing as such, and the subskills entailed in these or a focus on the sociolinguistic skills of communicative competence. Such a focus contrasts with **content**, which subordinates concern for the medium to concern for the message. I will illustrate examples of programmes currently operating at Edith Cowan University which fit into each of these boxes.

The fit is, of course, not perfect, since none of the courses or provisions is entirely discrete in terms of focus or function, and there are points where the dividing lines between the boxes dissolve. In general, however, I hope to show that those courses or provisions towards the bottom right hand corner have the greater claim to recognition for degree credit: those towards the top left hand corner have the least.

		FUNCTION	
		Academic Support	Academic
FOCUS	Skills	LITERACY UNIT (Language Remediation)	EAP (Language for Learning)
	Content	THEMATIC LOTE (Language & Learning)	IMMERSION LOTE (Language through Learning)

Figure i: A model for distinguishing LSP provisions at university

3. Application of the Model

As my first example, I would like to take what we call at Edith Cowan University the Literacy Unit. This illustrates a language learning provision which has the function of academic support and a focus on skills.

The Literacy Unit at Edith Cowan University consists of a team of five language teaching staff: one co-ordinator and four academic skills advisers, each based on one of the campuses of the university. The aim of the unit has been formulated as:

> "to enhance skill development and performance in literacy for Edith Cowan University students. Literacy development involves the integration of reading, writing, speaking, listening and critical thinking" (Cronin, 1992:2).

It was set up at the beginning of 1991 following the acceptance by the University of the report of a Working Party which had been commissioned to recommend action on what it described as "arguably the most pervasive deeply felt concern across the [university]" (Metcalfe, 1990:1).

The concern, which the working party found echoed in other similar institutions, was that English proficiency was "unacceptably low" among many students of the university, including the general body of students who had come into the university after graduating from high school as well as specific groups with particular needs, such as Aboriginal, overseas and mature age students. The report did not commit itself as to whether or not the perception of falling literacy standards was matched by reality. We might surmise that it is related to the fact that Australia, like some other countries, has moved quite rapidly over the last generation from an elite to a mass higher education system. But the report advocated a range of measures, including screening devices, diagnostic devices, remediation provisions and staff development.

At the end of the first year of its operation, the Literacy Unit had conducted 55 workshops and seminars reaching 645 students and its advisory staff had given 1,379 individual consultations to students who had come to them for help either as a result of lecturer referrals or out of their own sense of need (Cronin, 1992). Its predominant activity, then, was providing remedial help to students at points of identified need.

It is not my purpose to go into detail on the activities of the Literacy Unit, but rather to characterise it as part of an overall university programme of language teaching. The heavy use of the Unit by staff and students shows that it is meeting a need.

It has become an important service activity within the university and has attracted increasing resources. It is, however, not carried out by an academic department and its activities do not form an integral part of any academic programme. Its work on students' language is problem-driven and discontinuous. One way in which its services have been described by staff of the university is as "First Aid."

It is non-domain-specific, and is for the most part cognitively undemanding. It is, to use Graham's dichotomy, concerned with the 'useful' rather than the 'valuable'. In all these ways it differs from the mainstream academic teaching of the university. This is a part of the university's language programme which clearly should not attract academic credit.

Before moving on to consider another kind of programme, let us note that this kind of language remediation programme contributes significantly to the well-being of students and it and its teachers should have parity of esteem with other university activities and staff. "Service English courses", as they are sometimes called (e.g. Drury, 1983), are difficult to run successfully because of the fact that they intrude on the students' already heavy timetables, they neither attract marks nor academic credit, and they carry with them a stigma because of their remedial intention. The Literacy Unit at Edith Cowan University has achieved a fair measure of success partly because of its non-intrusiveness and heavy commitment to one-to-one student support and partly because, being provided at the university's expense by a separate service unit, it does not depend on the goodwill of academic staff from language departments to carry it as an extra part of their load.

Now I would like to consider a programme which I would describe as sharing with the literacy unit its focus on skills but differing from it in having an essentially academic function. The programme goes under the name of SILP (Special Intensive Language Programme) at Edith Cowan University, but I shall simply refer to it here as our EAP (English for Academic Purposes) course.

The EAP course is first and foremost a language skills course, but it also has many characteristics of academic study and is accepted by some faculties of the university as a credit carrying part of their degree programmes.

A number of factors led to the development of this course. First, there was a clear sense of student need. There was a demand for degree admission coming from many students of migrant origin and non-English-speaking background who were marginally below the English language entry requirement, or who, though meeting that requirement, were still seeking confirmation that their English could carry not only a communicative but also an academic load (c.f. Cummins, 1986:152). These persons were, in many cases, highly competitive with other applicants on academic grounds. Some already possessed degrees from foreign universities. They were, moreover, "saturated" with pre-tertiary English, having exhausted the provisions available through the Adult Migrant Education Service and the Technical and Further Education Colleges. They wanted to get into the meat of academic studies, but to receive English language support at the same time.

The student demand coincided with a concern on the part of some of the staff that the principle of equity, which was an important part of government and university educational policy, was not being complied with, in that students of English-speaking background could study elementary courses in languages other than English and count them for credit, while
students of non-English-speaking background could not claim credit even for high level ESL studies.

A number of surveys confirmed the clear demand for a university-level EAP course and the absence of any suitable alternative. (See Prescott and Mennicken, 1989).

At the same time, the discontinuation by the university of a number of non-viable courses in community languages had made available a team of qualified language teachers to set up and trial the new programme.

The planning began in 1985, and the course was first introduced on a trial basis in 1987. The course designers (Dr M.R. McEvedy and Dr R.T. Williams) surveyed all faculties to determine the linguistic demands of their classwork and assignment requirements on students. They isolated the tasks which students needed to be able to perform and they related them to the four macroskills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In order to ground the course in substantial content potentially applicable to coursework in all faculties, they identified four fields of discourse, to which it was possible to relate the teaching of all the faculties. These were: Society, Living Things (later renamed Life and the Environment), Science and Technology and The Arts.

Not only did the domains relate to distinctive content, but also to discipline-specific lexis, genres and registers. (Gibbs, 1991).

The course, then, comprised four thematically-organized units, each of which, to fit in with the university's timetabling system, was taught on a different day of the week over five hours. The entire course ran for 20 hours a week over 15 weeks and potentially yielded four units credit within a 22 unit degree programme. Assessment was on the basis of tasks, each linked to one of the macroskills. For each task there was one assessment during the semester and one in the final examination. The methodology employed was activity-based, and focused upon issues of debate within disciplines relevant to the domain with whose discourse the unit was concerned. (For details on unit activities, see Prescott and Mennicken, 1991).

The general aim of this course was expressed as:

> "to provide intensive academic English language skills experience and practice in the four areas of reading, listening, speaking, writing" (Prescott and Mennicken, 1989:64).

Its more specific aims incorporated:

* listening to, and note taking from spoken discourse drawn from the four content areas;
* recognising and interpreting the lexical and grammatical conventions used in studies in the four content areas;
* demonstrating the skills of alphabetisation, referencing conventions, summarising and layout conventions by compiling an annotated bibliography;
* undertaking library research in order to complete assignments;
* participating as a member of an audience in a variety of academic settings;
* reading and comprehending written texts drawn from the four content areas;
* analysing diagrammatic texts drawn from the four content areas;

* demonstrating in writing the ability to use a style and register appropriate to a particular field of study, topic, audience and communicative purpose;

* demonstrating in a seminar/discussion/lecturette the ability to use a style and register appropriate to a particular field of study, topic, audience and communicative purpose;

* undertaking visits in order to facilitate development of communicative functions;

* completing specific grammar exercises on computer to improve structural proficiency;

* completing specific oral exercises on tape to improve pronunciation skills" (Prescott and Mennicken, 1989:64-65).

It is, I think, clear that we have in this course a skills-based programme of a quite different order from that which is offered by the Literacy Unit.

The students engaged in the EAP course are already, through it, immersed in debating issues which are the concern of scholars in the field of discourse in which they are working. Their work is, then, not academic support, but academic. At the same time, linguistically, the focus is firmly on skills. This is, more than the remedial programme, a hybrid course. It is skills-driven (the skills being both linguistic and communicative) but, unlike some courses (such as those referred to by Swales, 1980:62), it does not suffer from "insufficient contact with the students' real world". for it is domain-specific and cognitively demanding. It is, then, I would argue, appropriate that some faculties should (as they do) grant this EAP course parity with other first year units within their degrees which attract academic credit.

The third course which I want to use as an example owes its origin to the EAP course, but it is not an English but rather a LOTE (Languages Other Than English) course, and exists in five independent language degree majors: Chinese, French, Italian, Japanese and Spanish.

I am calling it THEMATIC LOTE, since it is essentially a thematically-organized programme of teaching in each of these languages. Unlike the two courses we have already considered, the thematic LOTE course is essentially focused on content, not skills, yet, since it also takes responsibility for giving direct assistance to students in their learning of the language, it is also, in some respects, an academic support rather than an academic course.

The thematic LOTE course is intended for students who come to university with a background in the language, or who obtain such a background though taking an introductory course equivalent to one semester's full-time intensive study. The thematic LOTE course runs over three years and constitutes the Bachelor of Arts major study programme in the language concerned.

If we describe the EAP course as "language for learning," the thematic LOTE is rather "language and learning." in that it combines language study and thematic study while letting the theme, rather than the language, determine the agenda.

The themes around which the thematic LOTE programme is organized are at the widest level, the same ones which were developed for the EAP course. Indeed, they were made the organizing principle for the LOTE courses at the recommendation of the university's Language Studies Advisory Committee when it observed the valuable function they were performing in the EAP course. However, although it employs the same specification of fields of discourse, the thematic LOTE course is distinct from the EAP course in a number of ways.

First, it is a three-year programme and proceeds in cyclical fashion through the four themes (Society, Life and the Environment, Science and Technology and The Arts) at progressively more complex levels, in terms of language and content, each year.

Secondly, the thematic LOTE course combines academic study of the themes with academic study of the language. For example, in the unit ITALIAN Life and the Environment 3, as illustrated in Figure ii, it may be observed that the third year students are studying aspects of life and environment through Italian texts both technical and literary, and at the same time studying the diffusion and nature of Italian linguistic varieties. Likewise, students studying the unit FRENCH The Arts 3 are required not only to participate in the oral and written presentation of material related to movements in the arts in France, but also to adopt the language and the techniques textual analysis as practised in France. (See further, Figure iii).

The thematic LOTE course, then, requires a considerable level of mastery of content in the fields of discourse with which it is concerned and, by contrast with the EAP course, is focused more on "valuable" than on "useful" learning.

It is, however, not able to assume in the student the linguistic capacity to acquire this mastery without instructional support aimed at achieving, by the end of the course, a level of communicative competence approximating to Level 3+ on the Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale (ASLPR).

In keeping with this, the course, while dealing with technical subjects in the target language, does so in a way accessible to the lay person rather than the expert.

Third year students studying the unit SPANISH Science and Technology 3 are required to read and discuss a Spanish weekly science and technology magazine (Muy Interesante) as well as studying some of the scientific and technological innovations associated with the Spanish discoverers. They read a Spanish science fiction novel and they lead (in Spanish) tutorial discussions on subjects like sustainable development. Every effort is made, however, not to let the technical language come between the student and the material under discussion. As the co-ordinator of this course put it to me in personal communication:

> "...the 'thematic approach' is a type of 'specific learning' methodology in which we, in Spanish, stress the importance of developing communicative competence in the four language skills through focusing on themes which are of general interest to students without becoming too technical or too scientific... As far as possible, we discuss the areas taught using 'everyday language' appropriate to a particular year level. In other words, whatever the subject matter, the language to which our students will be exposed will be no more technical or scientific than the average, respectable Spanish language newspaper, magazine, novel, book, film." (F. Martinez, pers. comm.)

The thematic LOTE programme is, in short, a content-driven and cognitively demanding course, requiring advanced though not highly technical, second language skills, both linguistic and metalinguistic, and providing a supportive, though second-language-medium, environment in which they may be acquired. It combines some of the characteristics of traditional academic language courses with those of language courses for specific purposes, but, unlike most LSP courses, it provides within the context of the course itself (rather than anticipating in some future activity of the student) the challenges, in terms of content-mastery, which entail the need for the kind of language being imparted. The course is (justifiably, I think) recognized by Edith Cowan University as appropriate to earn full credit towards degree studies for the student.

WEEK 1	
THEMATIC AREA OF COMMUNICATION	**L'AMBIENTE DELLA CUCINA ITALIANA** Doc.: La scomparsa della cucina (from Sc. e Vita, 2/90)
ITALIAN LINGUISTICS	The origin of the Italian language and the first "Italian" documents (Handout)
LITERATURE APPRECIATION	Stanislao Nievo: Le Isole del Paradiso, 1.
WEEK 2	
THEMATIC AREA OF COMMUNICATION	**VITA E DIETA** Doc.: Grassi o magri perche' infelici (from: Sc. e Vita, 4/91)
ITALIAN LINGUISTICS	As from WEEK 1. Grammar revision and exercises.
LITERATURE APPRECIATION	S. Nievo: Le Isole del Paradiso. Ch. 2-3.
WEEK 3	
THEMATIC AREA OF COMMUNICATION	**CIBO E AMBIENTE** Doc.: La dieta Mediterranea (from Sc. e Vita, 1/91)
ITALIAN LINGUISTICS	Linguistic varieties in Italy (G. Hull, 1-5). Grammar revision and exercises.
LITERATURE APPRECIATION	S. Nievo: Le Isole del Paradiso Ch. 4 & 6.
WEEK 4	
THEMATIC AREA OF COMMUNICATION	**CIBO E AMBIENTE** Doc.: Nutriva gli Dei (from Sc. e Vita, 2/90).
ITALIAN LINGUISTICS	Italian dialects classification, features, diffusion (G. Hull, 6-8). Revision of grammar, exercises.
LITERATURE APPRECIATION	S. Nievo, Le Isole del Paradiso, Ch. 7-8.
WEEK 5	
THEMATIC AREA OF COMMUNICATION	**CIBO E VITA** Doc.: Come vivere bene di solo mais, (from Sc. e Vita, 4/91).
ITALIAN LINGUISTICS	Standard Italian; its relation to Latin (G. Hull, 9-10).
LITERATURE APPRECIATION	S. Nievo, Le Isole del Paradiso, Ch. 14 & 18.

Figure ii Extract from outline of Italian (Life and the Environment 3)

	A	B
TEMPS		
LIEU		
INTERLOCUTERURS scripteur & destinataire		
Idéologie		
ROLE		
ATTITUDE bienveillante / hostile / objective / competence professionnelle & linguistique		
LE REFERENT ce dont on parle variations individuelles spatio-temporelles		
FORME DU MESSAGE son genre SA DOMINANTE son ton		
TYPE DE DISCOURS centré sur le REFERENT description ou argumentation et démonstration		
centre sur le DESTINATAIRE texte qui cherche à CONVAINCRE à SEDUIRE		
centré sur L'EMETTEUR le scripteur exprime son affectivite par le langage Il est "implique"		
centre sur LUI-MEME poesie		

Figure iii French (The Arts 3) Textual Analysis form.

The final example I wish to present is currently in the experimental stages at the university. It is a programme which attempts in the most radical way to combine in a language course an academic function with a content focus. It is a course in Chinese culture taught entirely by medium of Mandarin Chinese to students who are intermediate level learners of the language. I am calling it Immersion LOTE, in that it is an attempt to replicate at the university level the kind of language teaching which has been carried out successfully at the school level, most notably in Canada under the name of immersion, and, although our experimental course is in Chinese, it could be equally well in any language other than English.

Edith Cowan University's attempts to experiment with this kind of programme were made possible by a research grant from the Australian Government's Department of Employment, Education and Training and by the co-operation of a sister-institution in China, the Guangzhou Foreign Language University. In co-ordinated research, the two universities are exploring the teaching of English by immersion in China and the teaching of Chinese by immersion in Australia.

While the major inspiration for this programme has come from the remarkably effective French school immersion programmes in Canada (see, e.g. Cummins and Swain, 1986), we have also been guided by precedents in higher education. Two programmes, in particular, have been of interest to us.

The first of these programmes is one which took place in the University of Ottawa, Canada's largest bilingual university, and which has been described by Marjorie Wesche (1985). This programme developed partly as a result of interest and demand generated at the university by the bilingual French programmes at school level.

In particular, the bilingual school programme has resulted in a demand at the university level for bilingual training to produce teachers to service it.

It is essential to the concept of immersion that academic subject matter should be taught by medium of the target language, and that the teacher should never use the learners' mother tongue. At university level, this means that highly complex and specialized content needs to be communicated to learners over a time span much more limited than that available in schooling. It is not practicable for us to teach beginning students of the language by immersion at university level.

In the programme described by Wesche, anglophone students who had studied French at school were taught a first year psychology course at university by medium of French. Although the instruction was by the same French native speakers as lectured to the francophone students, a "sheltered" environment was provided for the students by giving them, before each of their two 90 minute lectures, 15 minutes' targeted instruction by a teacher of French as a second language. They also were given more written outlines than usual, weekly short-answer quizzes and more emphasis on listening and reading. A parallel group of francophone students took the same psychology course by immersion in English, and the results of both groups were compared with those of their counterparts in the psychology course who were studying it in their native French or English. Wesche found that the immersion students, over the first semester course, learned as much psychology as the students who were studying in their native English or French students. They also improved in their second language skills more than students in regular second language classes, and they improved significantly in their perception of their second language proficiency and their confidence in using the language in real life situations. Wesche concluded from her study:

> "It appears then that university courses in academic disciplines can be structured and presented to do the following: expose students to their second language in a non-threatening context in which it is comprehensible, require students to concentrate on meaning rather than on form in their second language, and result in substantial improvement in students' second-language skills. Subject-matter teaching can be language teaching. Immersion can work at the university, too." (Wesche, 1985:937).

More recently, at the University of Utah, Steven Sternfeld has been associated with a programme in Spanish, German, French, Chinese, Italian and Japanese which is teaching undergraduates on immersion principles. The programme is called an "Immersion/Multiliteracy Program," aiming, as it does, at literacy in the target language, since this is seen to be a suitable basis for intellectually challenging activities for students at this level.

The content of the instruction is usually area studies related to the relevant language speaking groups. Students may only speak to their instructors in the target language and must carry out extensive reading assignments every evening, for which they are prepared by a pre-reading lecture. Students write research reports on appropriate topics, and keep daily and weekly journals. At the end of the course they write a "Letter to new Students" describing their experiences in the programme and giving advice to the incoming students on how to cope. (Sternfeld, 1992). Although his results are tentative, Sternfeld has observed that most students learning by this kind of a course not only save time (in that they learn language and culture in the time normally taken to learn language alone) but they also learn the language better than students in skills based courses. (See also Sternfeld, 1988).

It does seem that university level learners as well as children may benefit from immersion learning. Indeed, there is evidence that late immersion learners learn more effectively than early immersion learners.

This has been related to the older learners' "more mature level of general cognitive development...and/or to positive transfer from a fully developed first language system" (Genesee, 1984:43). Immersion learning lends itself to the university-relevant skills of active negotiation of meaning (Cummins, 1986:152-3) and it satisfies the need of students at this level for cognitively-demanding subject matter as a context for language learning. It has however the potential problem that, since it essentially involves context-embedded communication (Cummins, 1986:152), it may encourage the development of linguistically inexplicit communication and the persistence in the learners of an interlanguage (Safty, 1990:127).

It is too early to tell, at this stage, whether the experimental programme at Edith Cowan University will bear out the positive and negative findings of such studies as I have mentioned. The programme is in progress at this moment and results should become available by the end of this year. However, the import of this paper is not whether or not immersion is successful at university level but whether or not it is appropriate. As the model I have been using suggests, it would seem that immersion language courses offer the most appropriate form of language learning to meet the two university-relevant criteria of an academic, rather than an academic support, function, and a content, rather than a skills, focus. Wallace Lambert has argued that:

> "By focusing on subject matter mastery and on making language learning incidental, immersion programs differ substantively from second language teaching programs...Thus immersion programs are much more intense and comprehensive than second language programs..." (Lambert, 1984:12).

Immersion programmes differ from the others we have considered in that they combine the highest communicative linguistic demands with the highest cognitive demands and the greatest linguistic autonomy for the learner.

Their relative uncommonness in university programmes is, then, surprising. I believe that there is a place in universities for all four of the kinds of programmes I have discussed, but it would seem that the immersion programme is the most neglected, and the most deserving of a more assured place in academic language programmes.

4. Conclusion

We set off, in this paper, facing the question of the compatibility or otherwise of the currents within language teaching which are influencing universities in the present day. There is the pressure for the 'valuable' competing with the pressure for the 'useful', the need for academic rigour competing with the need for academic support, the need for the enhancement of students' command of content competing with the need for the enhancement of their skills. All of this has been highlighted by the increasing presence of specific purpose language courses in the universities alongside traditional language courses. My attempt to survey language teaching provisions at Edith Cowan University leads to three concluding observations. The first is that the university has moved increasingly towards a position where all the language programmes it provides for its undergraduates are, in a broad sense, language for specific purposes; the second is that, to meet the needs of a contemporary student population, our university (like, I think, most others) has found it necessary to provide a spectrum of language courses characterisable and distinguishable from one another by the relative emphasis they place on linguistic skills on the one hand and academic content on the other; the third is that there is no necessary reason why courses may not be concerned at the same time with "valuable" and academically rigorous learning and with the acquisition of language for specific purposes - in other words, languages for specific purposes and degree studies can be compatible.

REFERENCES

Cummins, J. 1986. "Language proficiency and academic achievement." In Jim Cummins and Merill Swain (eds.) Bilingualism in Education. London: Longman, pp. 138-161.

Cummins, Jim. 1991. "Empowering minority students: a framework for intervention." In Masahiko Minami and Bruce P. Kennedy (eds.) Language Issues in Literacy and Bilingual/Multicultural Education. Cambridge: Harvard Educational Review, pp. 372-390.

Cummins, Jim and Swain, Merill. 1986 (eds.) Bilingualism in Education. London: Longman.

Cronin, Marianne. 1992. Literacy Unit Annual Report 1991. Perth: Institute of Applied Language Studies, Edith Cowan University.

Drury, James. 1983. "The introduction of service English courses in ESL tertiary institutions in Africa." In Brumfit, C.J. (ed.) Language Teaching Projects for the Third World. Oxford: Pergamon Press, pp. 121-133.

Genesee, Fred. 1984. "Historical and theoretical foundations of immersion education." In Wallace E. Lambert et al. Studies on Immersion Education: a Collection for United States Educators. Sacramento: Office of Bilingual Bicultural Education, California State Department of Education, pp. 32-57.

Gibbs, Genevieve. 1991. "The evolution of the special intensive language programme." Unpublished paper. Perth: Faculty of Arts, Edith Cowan University.

Graham, Gordon. 1986. "The use and value of university education." Higher Education Review 18, 3: 7-16.

Harper, David. ed. 1986. ESP for the University. ELT Documents 123. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Jackson, R.F. 1968. "Foreign languages in Australian schools and universities." Babel 4, 3: 2-10.

Lambert, Richard. 1989. The National Foreign Language System. (NFLC Occasional Papers, no. 6). Washington: Johns Hopkins University.

Lambert, Wallace E. 1984. "An overview of issues in immersion education." In Wallace E. Lambert et al. Studies on Immersion Education: A Collection for United States Educators. Sacramento 4: Office of Bilingual Bicultural Education California State Department of Education, pp. 8-30.

Lambert, Wallace E. et al. 1984. Studies on Immersion Education: A Collection for United States Educators. Sacramento: Office of Bilingual Bicultural Education, California State Department of Education.

Leal, R.B., Bettoni, C. and Malcolm, I.G. 1991. Widening Our Horizons (Report of the Review of the Teaching of Modern Languages in Higher Education). Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

McGregor, A.L. 1987. "A submission to the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs to offer a package of bridging courses in advanced English for academic study/professional employment". Perth: Institute of Applied Language Studies, Edith Cowan University.

Metcalfe, C.D. 1990. "Report on the proposal to establish a student literacy unit." Unpublished paper. Perth: Institute of Applied Language Studies, Edith Cowan University.

Prescott, David and Mennicken, Mary. 1989. "A course in English for academic purposes for migrants in Perth, Western Australia." New Settlers and Multicultural Education Issues (Education Department, Wellington) 6,1:63-67.

Prescott, David and Mennicken, Mary. 1991. "Teaching study skills to advanced ESL/EFL students." In Cervi, D.A. (ed.) Proceedings of the 3rd Annual Educational Conference of the ELICOS Association. Sydney: ELICOS Association Limited, pp. 74-82.

Quinn, T.J. 1982. "Second language teaching in primary schools, secondary schools, and higher and further education." Australian Review of Applied Linguistics 5, 2:128-152.

Safty, Adel. 1990. "The sociolinguistic context of French immersion learning." In Bulletin de l'ACLA/Bulletin of the CAAL. 12, 2:125-132.

Sternfeld, Steven. 1988. "The applicability of the immersion approach to college foreign language instruction." Foreign Language Annals 21, 3:221-226.

Sternfeld, Steven. 1992. "An experiment in foreign education: the University of Utah's Immersion/Multiliteracy program." In R. Courchene, J.T. Glidden, J. St. John & C. Theren (eds.): Comprehension-based Second Language Teaching. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press: 407-432.

Swales, John. 1980. "The educational environment and its relevance to ESP programme design." In Elizabeth Smyth (ed.) Projects in Materials Design. London: The British Council, pp. 61-70.

Wesche, Marjorie Bingham. 1985. "Immersion and the universities." The Canadian Modern Language Review/La revue canadienne des langues vivantes. 415: 931-940.

RELC1993